



NEWSLETTER

SOUTH DAKOTA DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS

SOUTH DAKOTA DEPARTMENT OF THE MILITARY



SD GUARD RECRUITERS TO PROVIDE WATER BOTTLES TO STUDENTS

The South Dakota Army National Guard's Recruiting Command is helping to provide drinking water bottles for South Dakota students that are being impacted by COVID-19.

With drinking water fountains shutdown on high school and college campuses to help prevent the spread of the COVID-19 virus, National Guard recruiters across the state will be distributing up to 28,000 water bottles to help keep students hydrated.

"The South Dakota Army National Guard has a strong relationship with South Dakota high schools and colleges, so when we were informed that schools would be shutting down their drinking fountains we wanted to help," said Lt. Col. Tracy Graves, commander of the SDARNG's Recruiting Command. "We have purchased and will be providing 28,000 water bottles to high school and college students across the state."

Each of the SDARNG's 32 recruiters will receive a portion of the 28,000 bottles to help support high schools and colleges within their recruiting area. The water bottles are designed to meet school specifications for use, such as having a clear exterior and secure lids.

"The SDARNG cares for our communities and high schools and will continue to stand with South Dakota in the fight against the spread of COVID-19," said Graves. "Providing these water bottles to students who can use them is a small way we can help assist."



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RICH SCHILD BRIDGE DEDICATED

This past weekend veterans, family members, and community leaders gathered in Yankton to dedicate the SFC Richard Schild bridge. The westbound James River Bridge on Highway 50 just outside of Yankton will now be the SFC Richard Schild Memorial Bridge.



On December 4, 2005, Rich paid the ultimate for our freedoms when he was killed in action while serving in Operation Iraqi Freedom. He fought not for fame or recognition, but because it was the right thing to do.

"It is our sacred duty to keep his legacy fresh in the memories of future generations; for his service is the cornerstone of our great nation," said Greg Whitlock, Secretary of the South Dakota Department of Veterans Affairs.



Guest speakers for the dedication were: Secretary-Whitlock, BG Marshall Michels, Yankton County VSO Michael McDonald, Dennis Krejci and Rich's brother, Brooks Schild.

The dedication is part of a Fallen Heroes Program led by the South Dakota Departments of Veterans Affairs, Military and Transportation.

"What a great way to honor our veterans and share their respective story," said Whitlock.



BOWEN REPRESENTS VETERANS AT WALK OF HOPE

SDDVA Field Service Officer Kevin Bowen and his family participated in the ninth annual Walk of Hope Saturday at the Capitol Lake Visitor's Center.

The Walk of Hope's focus is suicide prevention.

Keynote speaker for the event was Kevin Polky, a counselor from Wisconsin.

The state Department of Social Services received a \$1.2 million federal grant intended to help prevent suicide in the 25 and older age group. It is estimated these funds will help more than 68,000 South Dakotans in the fight against adult suicide over the next three years.



HUNTING OPPORTUNITY FOR FEMALE VETERANS

Ranch Ministries, near Pierre, is hosting a hunting outing for female veterans. The hunt is opened to the first eight that apply and will be held October 27-29.

The rules for the hunt are simple: must be a veteran or the wife of a veteran, and must be able to acquire a South Dakota hunting license.

If interested, please contact Darren Kinney at 402-430-5876.

The Ranch Ministries is a ranch located on the Korkow properties in South Dakota. It is a place for rest, relaxation and fun, and with a bit of work thrown in at times.



UPDATE FROM SIOUX FALLS VET CENTER

Work has been different since COVID-19 for the Sioux Falls Vet Center and the veterans, service members and their families served. Before COVID-19, their primary mode of services was through face to face appointments and groups. They did some phone sessions and were working towards implementing and increasing use of telehealth for sessions. COVID-19 made it more important to increase their telehealth services quickly.

Telehealth sessions have yielded some benefits for their counselors and for our veterans and service members over their traditional face to face in-office sessions. Before COVID, they traveled to Community Access Points (CAPs) to meet with their veterans face to face, which has not been possible during this interim period. A reduction in windshield time has made it possible to serve more veterans and service members. The use of telehealth for appointments should also make it easier to continue services.

Telehealth allows Vet Centers to “go into” veterans homes or workplaces which has offered some benefits and allowed for flexibility in scheduling around work, school, or other life events. It also allows for other family members to be involved in sessions or groups that may not otherwise have been able to happen.

Telehealth also has its challenges. Not all people have access to technology or internet or are just unfamiliar or uncomfortable with technology. Vet Center staff are able to offer assistance or practice appointments for those who would prefer that, and they can connect with a tech support team to trouble shoot other issues that may arise.

Vet Centers recognize the challenges of telehealth and prefer to be able to meet with people in person whether it is at the Vet Center or at one of the CAPs.

Face-to-face sessions that are taking place at the Sioux Falls Vet Center require strict screening protocols including pre-screen questions, taking temperatures, and wearing face coverings.

COVID-19 has certainly brought about many changes in our lives, but what hasn't changed is the Vet Center's desire to serve veterans, service members and their families.



GENE MURPHY RECOGNIZED BY GOVERNOR NOEM

Governor Kristi Noem presented the 2020 Governor's Awards Tuesday to South Dakota businesses and individuals who have made significant contributions to improving independent living and increasing employment opportunities for people with disabilities.

Eugene "Gene" Murphy has made it his life's mission to help fellow veterans and individuals with disabilities. His attitude and personal example are major factors in the growth and recognition of veterans and disability related issues in South Dakota. His involvement and empathetic care for veterans experiencing wartime injuries was and continues to be invaluable to veterans returning home. For this, Murphy received the Distinguished Service Award.



The 2020 Governor's Awards ceremony was co-sponsored by the Board of Vocational Rehabilitation, the Board of Service to the Blind and Visually Impaired, the Statewide Independent Living Council, and the South Dakota Department of Human Services.

2020 Annual Boots on the Ground Veterans Clothing Drive

OCTOBER 3RD 1130-1500, VFW POST 1273, 420 MAIN ST RAPID CITY

ITEMS NEEDED:

**Cold weather clothing such
as jackets, gloves, hats,
thermals, etc.**

Boots and Shoes

NEW Socks and Underwear

**We can come to you for larger quantity
donations. Please call Brandon at
907-406-4412 for arrangements.**

COUNTRY MAKES A MILESTONE COMMITMENT TO PRIORITIZE SUICIDE PREVENTION FOR VETERANS

The President's Roadmap to Empower Veterans and End a National Tragedy of Suicide (PREVENTS) Office and the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) announced today [42 states and one U.S. territory](#) signed the PREVENTS state proclamation pledging their prioritization of suicide prevention for Veterans and all citizens in their jurisdictions. South Dakota is one of the 42 states.

Each state pledging promises to promote and amplify the [REACH](#) public health campaign that encourages everyone to reach out to those who are vulnerable and to reach out when they themselves are in need of help.

As part of the implementation of the president's roadmap, the [PREVENTS Office](#) is meeting with state and community leaders in all 50 states and territories to ensure best practices for suicide prevention are identified and applied, efforts are coordinated within the state and federal government and the public health messages are promoted before the initiative concludes in March 2022.

"With the commitment of our nation's governors, this undertaking has moved beyond an idea to reality — as it is only viable when governors enlist the full authority and backing of their state to combat this crisis," said VA Secretary Robert Wilkie. "September is National Suicide Prevention Month and through the outpouring of support echoed by governors issuing state proclamations, their efforts assist with meeting the requirements of the president's [White House Task Force](#) for PREVENTS, which provides the nation with an essential, collaborative forum to address this national crisis through local and state-focused solutions to help us end Veteran suicide.

To engage all 50 states and five U.S. territories, the PREVENTS office developed a state proclamation for governors codifying their full commitment to preventing suicide in their states, with a special focus on veterans and other high-risk populations, such as Native Americans, first responders, individuals age 10-34 for whom suicide is the second leading cause of death, people living in rural communities and LGBTQ individuals.

Additionally, the office is working with key community leaders — including veterans service organizations, military service organizations, business leaders, academic institutions and faith-based communities. To date, PREVENTS has held in-person visits in Arizona, California, Florida, Tennessee and Texas, and virtual visits in Indiana and Oklahoma.

"Collaborating with state and community leaders to advance the mission of suicide prevention for veterans and all Americans is imperative," said PREVENTS Executive Director Barbara Van Dahlen, Ph.D. "As we move forward to change the culture around mental health in general and suicide in particular, we will continue to elevate and amplify the great work our states are already doing as we leverage lessons learned and best practices to accelerate our efforts to heal families and save lives."

VA EXPANDS VETERAN ACCESS TO TELEHEALTH WITH IPADS

The U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) announced a new collaboration with Apple to increase veterans' access to virtual care benefits.

The VA's iPad program provides qualifying veterans with cellular-enabled iPads to access telehealth services and currently helps more than 50,000 veterans across the country connect to VA health care services virtually.

"The VA will continue working diligently to provide veterans with the tools and resources necessary to access quality health care when and where they need it," said VA Secretary Robert Wilkie. "The VA's partnership with Apple is an integral step in helping to bridge the digital divide for veterans everywhere. This is particularly critical during the COVID-19 public health emergency, when telehealth is being leveraged to protect the safety and well-being of both our veterans and clinicians."

The VA has been a leader in telehealth services for decades and began the Connected Tablet program in 2016. A VA [study](#) found veterans who received tablets, reported high levels of satisfaction with care, were less likely to miss appointments and found it easier and more convenient to access VA care.

To standardize the program and provide veterans a consistent, quality experience, the VA will exclusively distribute iPads to veterans. iPads offer veterans the combination of portability, user experience, data privacy and security made possible through Apple's integrated hardware and software platform. The collaboration between the VA and Apple, facilitated by the [VA Secretary's Center for Strategic Partnerships](#), provides the VA with Apple's expertise to help enhance the platform and ensure veterans and health care professionals have the best telehealth experience.

"The VA's iPad program provides unparalleled convenience and flexibility when attending my VA appointments," said Fiona Garcia, a U.S. Air Force Veteran who served from 2001-2011. "After receiving an iPad in March, I've been able to receive VA care when and where I need it most. The technology also allows me to stay connected with my doctors when I am not near a Wi-Fi connection or near the VA medical center."

As part of the VA's commitment to supporting veteran health care, patients can also securely view and download their personal medical data using the Health Records on iPhone feature from Apple.

Veterans who don't currently have a video-capable device or internet service and are interested in VA's telehealth iPad program should consult their VA health care team to determine their eligibility.

Visit [Connected Care](#) for more information about VA telehealth.

PROTECT YOURSELF. PROTECT YOUR FAMILY. PROTECT YOUR COMMUNITY. GET YOUR FLU SHOT TODAY

Eligible veterans can now receive their seasonal flu shots at more than 60,000 Community Care Network (CCN) retail pharmacies and urgent care locations. This replaces the Walgreens Retail Immunization Care Coordination Program, which ended in March 2020.

Click [here](#) to learn more about these CCN locations. You can access a map to all community in-network locations and a chart indicating what type of locations veterans can go to in their regions to receive their flu shots.

No appointment or VA referral is required. Veterans need to present a valid government-issued identification (e.g. Veterans Health ID Card, Department of Defense ID card, state-issued driver's license or ID card, etc.).

Veterans can also use the [VA Locator](#) to find a VA facility, in-network retail pharmacy, or urgent care location near them by using this link: <https://www.va.gov/find-locations>.

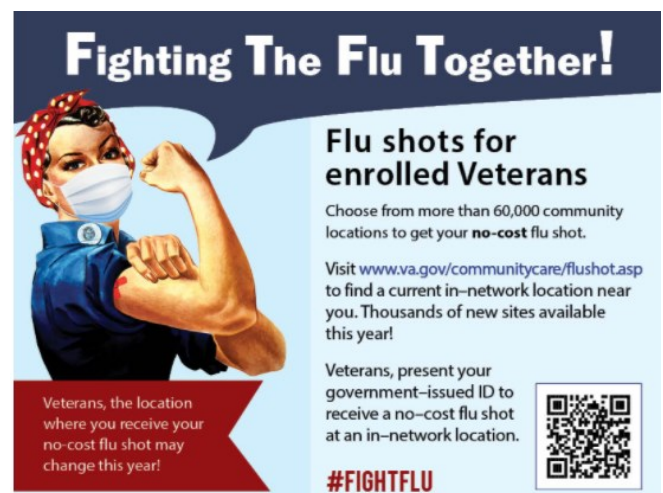
Eligibility:

Retail pharmacies: Veterans must be enrolled in the VA health care system.

Urgent care locations: Veterans must be enrolled in the VA health care system and have received care from a VA or in-network community provider in the past 24 months.

Get Recommended Immunizations: “Preventing the Flu Begins with You.”

Find out which immunizations are recommended for you through this [CDC site](#). For additional information click [here](#)



Fighting The Flu Together!

Flu shots for enrolled Veterans

Choose from more than 60,000 community locations to get your **no-cost** flu shot.

Visit www.va.gov/communitycare/flushot.asp to find a current in-network location near you. Thousands of new sites available this year!

Veterans, present your government-issued ID to receive a no-cost flu shot at an in-network location.

#FIGHTFLU

Veterans, the location where you receive your no-cost flu shot may change this year!



VOA Veterans Resource Fair

**Tuesday
9/22/2020
10am-2pm**

**Holiday Inn Parking Lot
505 N. 5th Street
Rapid City, SD 57701**

**All agencies & businesses
welcome to participate.**

**Services offered:
Lunch, clothing, sanitary kits, much more!
Contact Lisa (605) 341-3809**

Please assist a Veteran to attend ♿

BENEFICIARY TRAVEL PROGRAM LAUNCH DATE

In November 2020, the VA Beneficiary Travel Program will offer eligible veterans, caregivers, and other beneficiaries the ease of submitting travel reimbursement claims through a new online claims reimbursement tool called the **Beneficiary Travel Self Service System (BTSSS)**.

- Veterans can submit and track beneficiary travel reimbursement claims online from a computer or mobile device 24/7/365 days a year through the secure, AccessVA website at <https://access.va.gov/accessva/>, using a DS Logon Level 2 account or VA PIV card to authenticate the identity of the user.
- BTSSS ensures timely processing and payment of travel reimbursements and reduces manual intervention and improper claim payments through automated features.
- BTSSS replaces the kiosk method and reduces the need for completing hard copy claim and in-person claim submissions.

A composite image showing an American flag waving on the left and several handmade cards on the right. The cards are white with colorful drawings and the text "To: Someone Special!".

CARDS FOR VETERANS

RESIDENTS IN NURSING HOMES ARE CURRENTLY NOT ALLOWED VISITORS DUE TO COVID-19. REMIND THEM THEY ARE NOT ALONE BY SENDING NOTES, CARDS, AND DRAWINGS TO BRIGHTEN THEIR DAY!

PLEASE SEND CARDS TO:

MICHAEL J. FITZMAURICE
SOUTH DAKOTA VETERANS HOME
ATTN: CARDS FOR VETERANS
2500 MINNEKAHTA AVENUE
HOT SPRINGS, SD 57747

The logo for the South Dakota Department of Veterans Affairs, featuring silhouettes of soldiers and the text "South Dakota DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS".

UPCOMING EVENTS

Sep 18—POW/MIA Day Ceremony—Veterans Memorial Park—Sioux Falls—6:30 pm (CT)

Oct 3—SGT Allen Kokesh Jr. Fallen Hero Bridge Dedication—Yankton County Court House—1:00 pm (CT)

Oct 14—SGT Daniel Busse Fallen Hero Bridge Dedication—Highmore High School Auditorium—1:30 pm (CT)

Oct 21—SD Veterans Council Meeting—Sioux Falls

Nov 11—SSG Jason W. Montefering and SGT Jeremiah Boehmer Fallen Hero Bridge Dedication—Parkston High School Auditorium—9:00 am (CT)

Nov 13—VABHHCS VSO Congressional Forum—Domiciliary Auditorium—Hot Springs VAMC—10:00 am (MT)

Dec 1—Governor's State of the Budget Address—1:00 pm (CT)

Jan 12—Governor's State of the State Address—1:00 pm (CT)

Jan 13—SDDVA/SD Veterans Council Legislative Reception

Audry Ricketts, Public Information Officer

South Dakota Department of the Military <https://military.sd.gov/default.html>

South Dakota Department of Veterans Affairs <https://vetaffairs.sd.gov>

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